



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Tennessee Women Veterans Summit

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Director, VA Center for Women Veterans**

April 5, 2014



Agenda



- **VA Organization and Priorities**
- **CWV Mission and Operations**
- **Women Veterans Demographics/History/Utilization**
- **Challenges Faced by Women Veterans**
 - **VA Initiatives to Address Challenges**
- **Health Care for Women Veterans**
 - **Overview of Services Available**
 - **Mental Health**
 - **Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma**
 - **Where to Get Help**
- **Advocating Cultural Transformation**
- **Summary**
 - **Where We are Going**
 - **How to Contact the Center for Women Veterans**



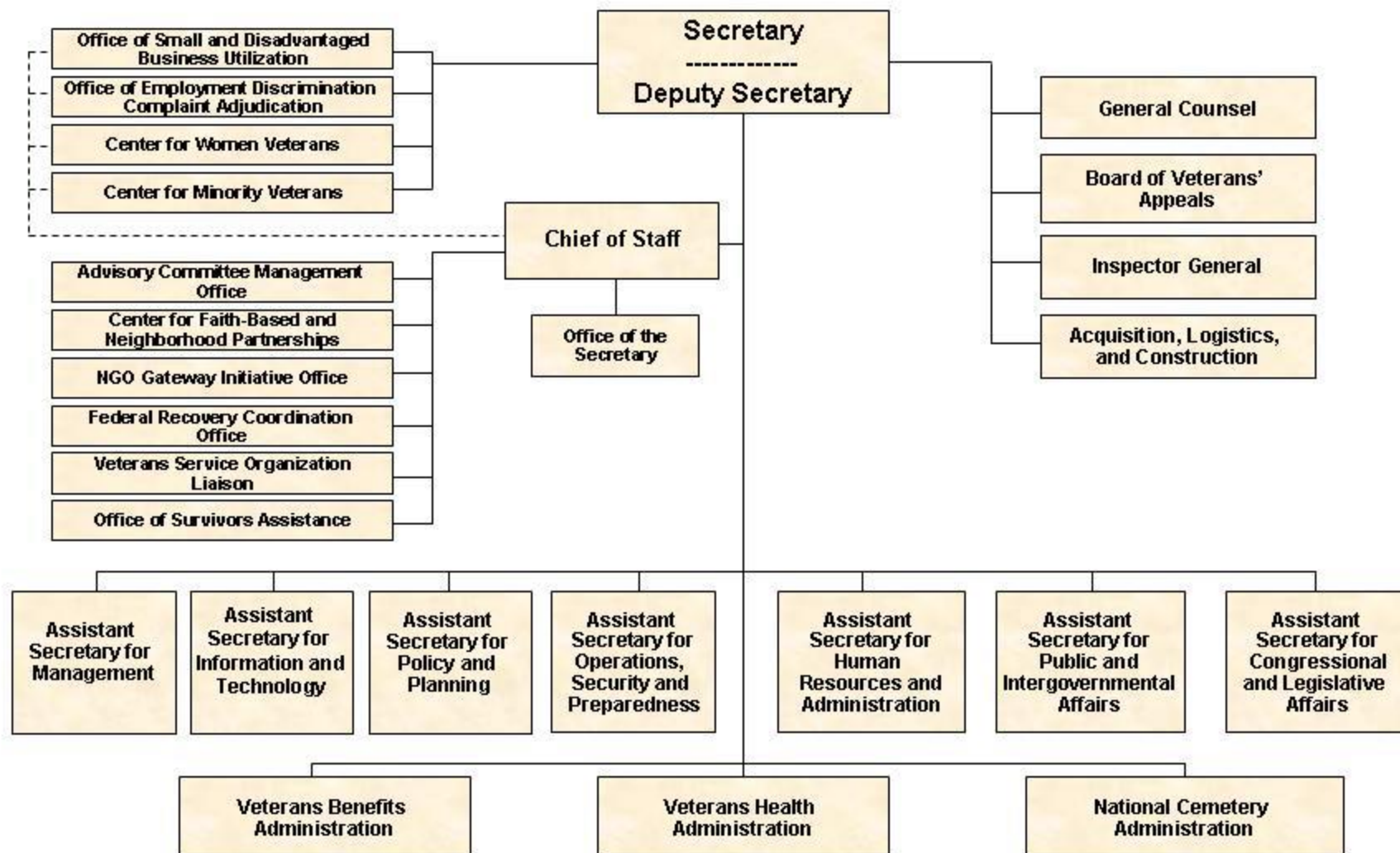
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Organization and Priorities





VA Organization Chart

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS





VA Priorities

VA's priorities: **Access**, **Backlog**, **Homelessness**

- Improving access to benefits and services for eligible Veterans:
 - Promoting eBenefits registration to facilitate access to documentation and information
 - Diversifying outreach materials to include more images of women in receipt of VA health care and services
 - Providing the Women Veterans Call/Hotline Line
- Aggressively attacking the claims backlog:
 - Using disability benefits questionnaires (DBQs) to shorten time needed to succinctly gather information needed to assess disabilities
 - Implementing a National paperless claims processing system



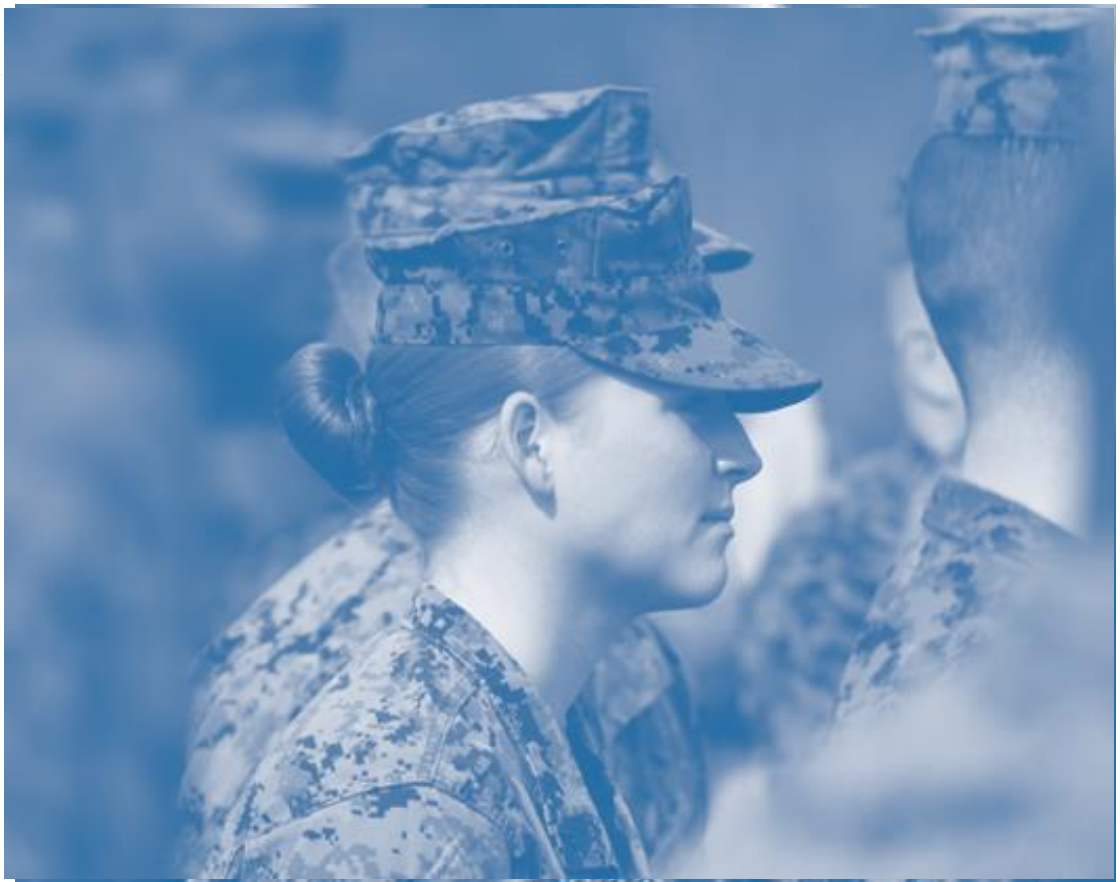
VA Priorities


Ending Veteran homelessness:

- VA's goal is a systematic end to homelessness, which means there will be no Veterans sleeping on our streets and every Veteran has access to permanent housing by the end of 2015.
- Since 2010, homeless among Veterans is down 24%.
- VA is the Nation's largest single provider of homeless treatment and benefits assistance services to Veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- VA's continuum of care includes services for special populations such as women and Veterans with families.
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) is VA's primary prevention program, designed to help Veterans and their families rapidly exit homelessness, or avoid entering homelessness.
- In FY 2013, Women Veterans made up ten percent of Veterans served by VA homeless programs.



Center for Women (CWV) Mission and Operations



A vibrant display of fireworks exploding in a dark night sky, with streaks of light in various colors including yellow, orange, and purple.

The Center for Women Veterans Celebrates **20** Years of Service

**November 1994, Public Law 103-446
required VA to create
The Center for Women Veterans,
to monitor and coordinate VA
programs for women**



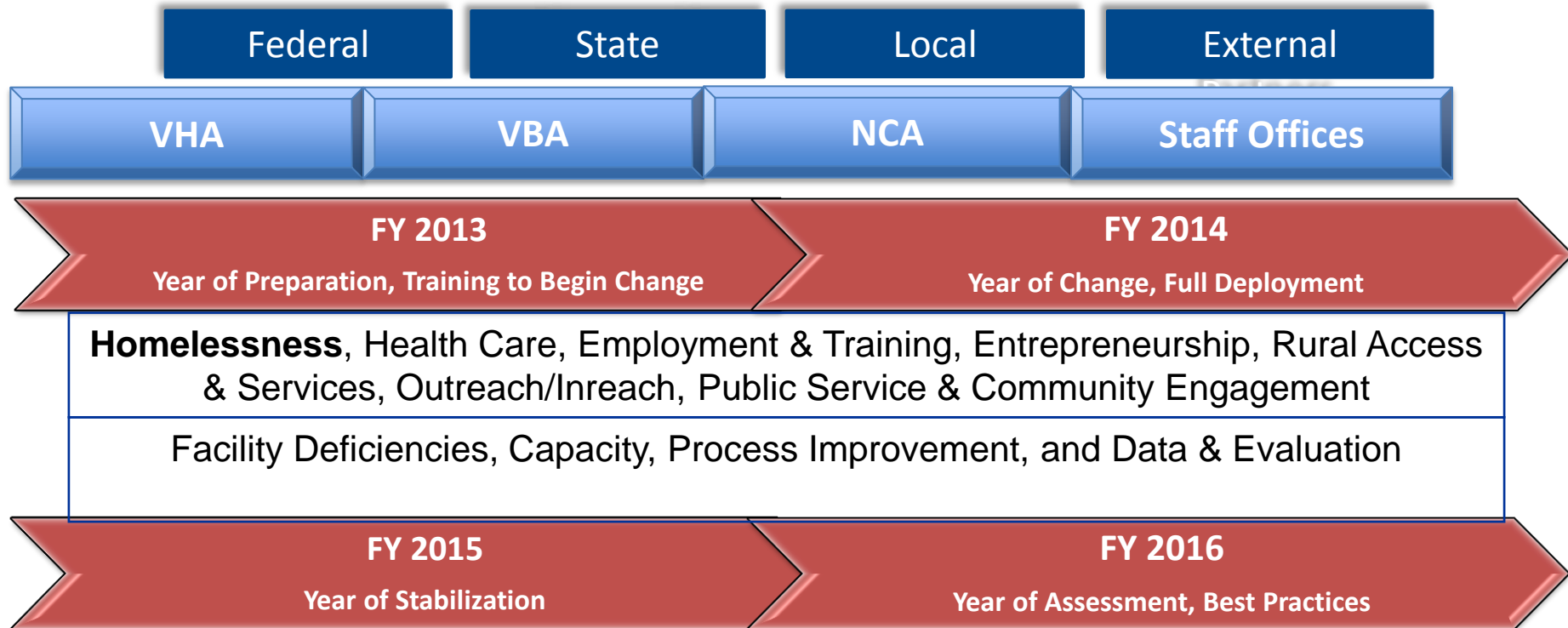
Our Mission

- **Monitor and coordinate** VA's administration of health care and benefits services, and programs for women Veterans.
- **Serve as an advocate** for a cultural transformation (both within VA and in the general public) in recognizing the service and contributions of women Veterans and women in the military.
- **Raise awareness** of the responsibility to treat women Veterans with dignity and respect.



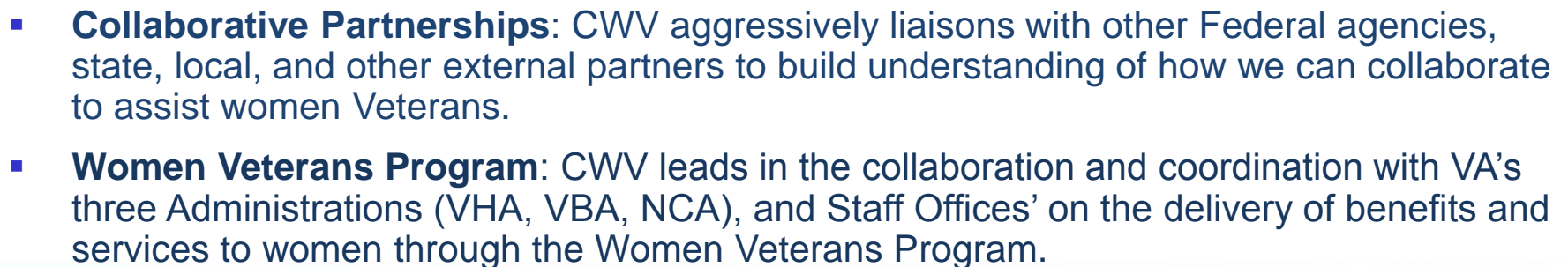
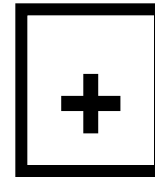
CWV's Transformation Plan

CWV's transformation plan in a multi-year approach:





Internal: Women Veterans Program



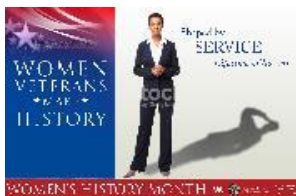


Collaborative Initiatives

Women's History Month 2014:

VA's Twitter Town Hall

Character, Courage & Commitment, VA focused the month on "Women Veterans Make History"



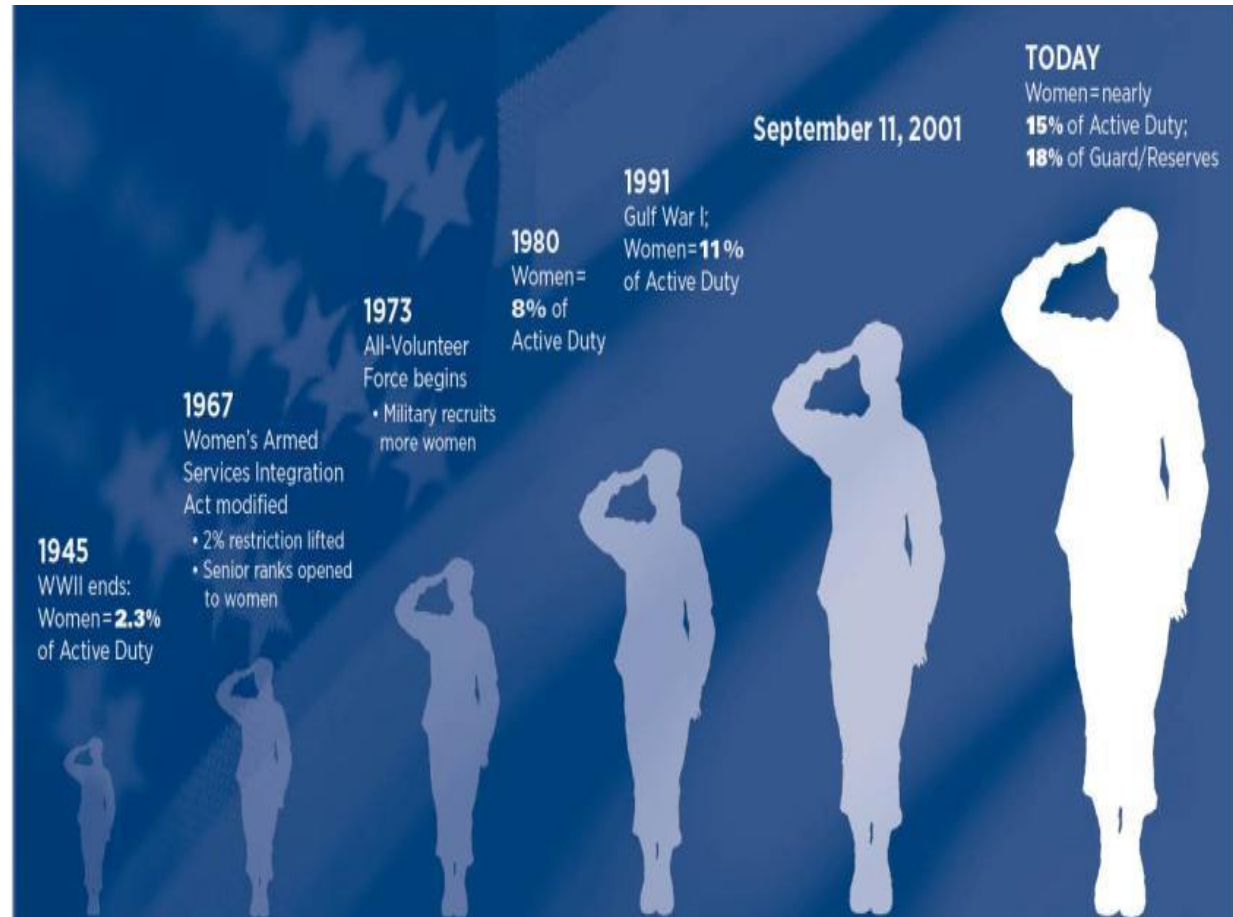
White House/VA Champions of Change for Women Veterans



eBenefits Access 24/7 Targeted Messaging



Demographics, History, and Utilization



Source: America's Women Veterans: Military Service History and VA Benefits Utilization Statistics, Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, Nov. 23, 2011;
http://www.va.gov/VETDATA/docs/SpecialReports/Final_Womens_Report_3_2_12_v_7.pdf



Demographics/History/Utilization

Chronology of Significant Legal and Policy Changes Affecting Women in the Military: 1948-2013

- **1948:** Women's Armed Service Integration Act allows women in the service but with a ceiling of 2 percent. Women were prohibited from top posts of general and admiral.
- **1951:** The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) is created.
- **1967:** Women's Armed Service Integration Act is modified. Congress removes the 2 percent restriction and allows women to rise to the top. Within 2½ years, the Army has two women brigadier generals.
- **1973:** Congress repeals the draft and creates all-volunteer military. Recruiters seek women to fill their quotas.
- **1991:** Congress repeals laws banning women from flying in combat.
- **1993:** Congress repeals a law banning women from duty on combat ships.
- **1994:** Pentagon announces Ground Combat Exclusion Policy formally restricting women from assignments to the Infantry, Special Forces and Armor.
- **January 2013:** U.S. Defense Secretary and the Joint Chiefs of Staff announce plans to lift the ban on women in combat by 2016. Women make up about 14.5 percent of the combined forces.



Demographics/History/Utilization

Current Women Veterans Demographics:

- Women are one of the fastest growing subpopulations of Veterans. Based on active duty and recruiting numbers, the percentage of women Veterans is projected to increase.
- 2,271,222 million women Veterans of the 21,972,964 million living Veterans, (VetPop as of 9/30/13) –10.4 percent of the total Veterans population.
- By 2020, they are estimated to be 12.4 percent the total Veterans populations.
- As women Veterans population increases, total Veterans population declines.
- Median female Veteran's age is 49 (male – 64, as of 9/30/12).

Sources: [VetPOP 2007](#) and [VetPOP 2011](#), [VetPOP 2013](#) ADUSH for Policy and Planning



Demographics/History/Utilization

Women VHA Users Doubled Since 2000

FY00: 159,000



FY12: 360,000



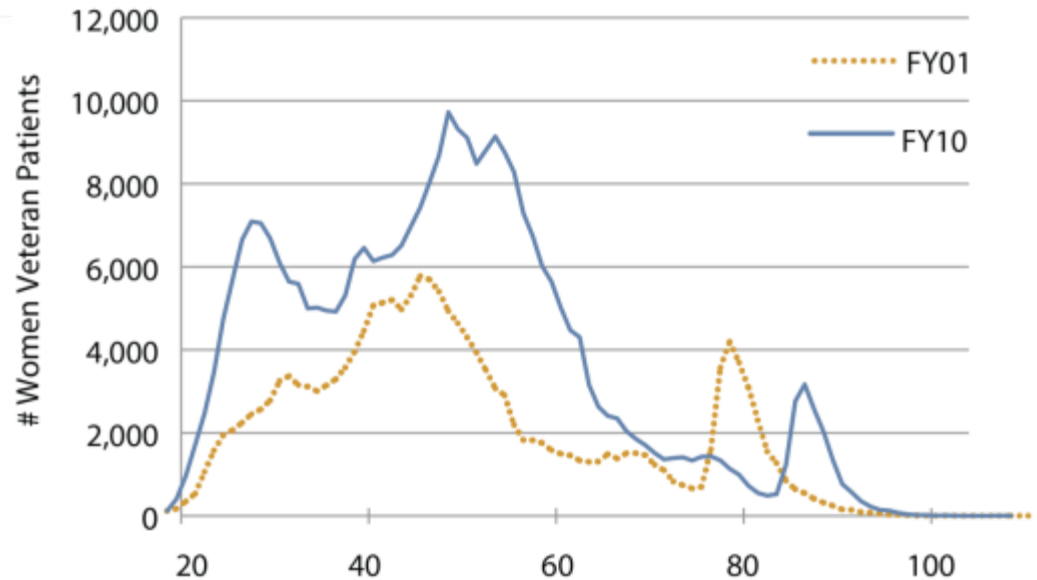


Demographics/History/Utilization

Women VHA Users:

- Over 390,000 utilized Veterans Health Administration (VHA) health care services in FY 2013.
- Women Veterans using VHA services have been increasing 7% per year which results in a 60% growth of women Veterans using VHA between FY 2009 and FY 2015.
- Care provided to women Veterans at 151 medical centers and 985 outpatient clinics.

Age Distribution of Women Veteran Patients, FY 01 and FY10:



Source: Women's Health Evaluation Initiative and VHA Women's Health Services. *Sourcebook: Women Veterans in the Veterans Health Administration. Volume 2. Sociodemographics and Use of VHA and Non-VA Care Fee.* 2012.



Challenges Faced by Women Veterans and VA Initiatives





Challenges Faced by Women Veterans

Women Veterans:

- Are unaware of their Veterans status; they often do not self identify as Veterans.
- Do not apply for VA's benefits and services, since they are not aware that they are Veterans.
- Are sometimes limited in access to VA's gender-specific care and use fee based care and contracts.
- Experience a lack of child care options, which limit their ability to make appointments at VA, to acquire gainful employment and to pursue educational goals.
- Exhibit lower utilization of VA.
- Experience lack of transportation to and from appointments.



VA Initiatives to Address Challenges

- Web site and social media
- Collaboration with federal, state, local and external partners
- Health care:
 - Child care
 - Non-VA care/coordination of care
 - Transportation
 - Research related to VA health care
- Benefits:
 - Hiring/employment initiatives
- Memorial affairs:
 - Expanding access: outreach to women Veterans
 - Expanding access: funeral directors resource kit



Health Care for Women Veterans





Health Care Available for Women Veterans

General Care

- ✓ Health evaluation and counseling
- ✓ Disease prevention
- ✓ Nutrition counseling
- ✓ Weight control
- ✓ Smoking cessation

Gender-Specific Primary Care

- ✓ Cervical cancer screens (Pap smears)
- ✓ Breast cancer screens (mammograms)
- ✓ Birth control
- ✓ Preconception counseling and care
- ✓ Maternity & newborn care
- ✓ Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine
- ✓ Menopausal support (hormone replacement therapy)
- ✓ Emergency services for women Veterans



Mental Health Care

VA offers a full continuum of mental health services for women Veterans:

- **General outpatient services:** assessment, evaluation, pharmacotherapy, individual, group and family psychotherapy, and reproductive mental health
- **Specialty mental health services:** posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, substance abuse disorders, homelessness
- **Evidence-based therapies:** available at all VA medical centers
- **Inpatient and residential treatment:** mixed-gender and women-only

Mental health services must be provided in a manner that recognizes that gender-specific issues can be important components of care.



Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

- Term VA uses to refer to experiences of sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment occurring during a Veteran's military service.
- VA is committed to ensuring both male and female Veterans have access to services that will help them in their recovery from MST.
 - All MST-related treatment is provided free of charge.
 - No documentation of the MST is required.
 - Service connection (VA disability compensation) is also not required.
 - Veterans may be able to receive free MST-related care even if they are not eligible for other VA care.
 - There are no length of service or income requirements to receive MST-related care.
- Every VA health care system has an MST Coordinator to assist Veterans in accessing care.

VA Services for Military Sexual Trauma:



Help
Hope
Healing



Where to Get Help

- **Health care:** Full-time women Veterans program managers (WVPM) at VA health care facilities across the country to outreach to women Veterans and assist them with accessing VA's health care services.
<http://www.womenshealth.va.gov>
- **Women Veterans Call Center:** Incoming and Outgoing at 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)
- **Benefits:** Designated women Veterans coordinators (WVC) at all VA regional offices (RO); www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isFlash-1
- **Homeless:** Homeless Veterans coordinators: www.va.gov/homeless/index.cfm
- **Minority:** Minority Veterans program coordinator at every VA healthcare facility, regional office, and national cemetery: www.va.gov/centerforminorityVeterans/
- Other coordinators such as OIF/OEF, mental health, MST, Vet Center, etc.



Advocating for Cultural Transformation





Advocating Cultural Transformation

Culture Change Through Communications:

- Women's Health Services is leading a VA-wide communication initiative to enhance the **language, practice and culture** of VA to be **more inclusive of women Veterans**.



WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Mother, daughter, sister, wife, partner ... veteran.

VA cares for the whole woman.

- Primary care
- Reproductive care
- Mental health care
- Sensitive to women veterans' needs and experiences

VA's national network ensures that your medical history goes where you go.

Department of Veterans Affairs



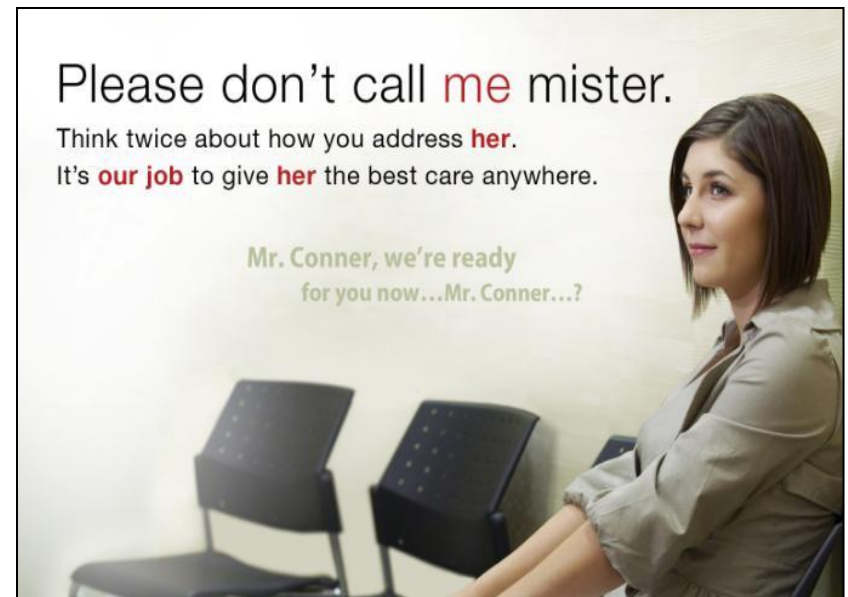
Summary





Summary - Where We Are Going

Continuously promoting recognition of women Veterans' service, and the contributions of women in the military, e.g. "Her Story" campaign, "the Right Place" PSA, and "Please Don't Call Me Mister" campaigns.





How to Contact the Center

Staff Members:

- Ms. Elisa Basnight, JD, MPA
- Dr. Betty Moseley Brown
- Desiree Long
- Shannon Middleton
- Michelle Terry

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